

## CHAPTER 5

# Community-based Rehabilitation as Part of Inclusive Education and Development

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## SUMMARY

*This chapter describes the relationship between community-based rehabilitation and inclusive education. It also presents case studies from Uganda and Kenya on special needs education and inclusive education respectively, for other African countries to learn from. Finally, some recommendations have been made highlighting the way forward for African countries, to utilise the community based rehabilitation strategy in the provision of education for all children in the community.*

## INTRODUCTION

Societies respond differently to the provision of services such as education, health, transport, employment, and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities. Accessibility to services by persons with disabilities continues to be a major challenge in all parts of the world, but especially in developing countries. However, many countries have realised the

advantages of including persons with disabilities in all development activities. Policies have been adapted to safeguard and improve their lives, and programmes such as Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and Inclusive Education (IE) have been put in place. The overall aim of these programmes, is to develop the potential of persons with disabilities and for them to become productive citizens in the community.

IE and CBR are strategies that address the issues and challenges affecting persons with disabilities and their families. They have been developed to challenge the exclusionary policies and practices, which have predominated in previous decades. They recognise the value of individuals with disabilities and challenge professional and community attitudes. Parents of individuals with disabilities are valued as participatory partners, since they provide first hand information and support to the special needs educators and CBR workers.

CBR aims to focus on rehabilitation, equalisation of opportunities and social inclusion of all persons with disabilities and their families. IE has a similar philosophy and aims to include disabled children in mainstream education, overcoming barriers to learning and participation in community educational settings. Both approaches value diversity and promote inclusion. They both aim to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to the services that are available to other people in the community, such as education and employment.

Education empowers and strengthens all people in the community. It equips people with knowledge and skills that are crucial to the development of individuals and their capacity to access their rights. According to a recent report for the World Bank Disability Group, "*Education is widely seen as a means to develop human capital, to improve economic performance and to enhance individual capabilities and choices in order to enjoy freedoms of citizenship*" (Peters 2003). Therefore, through CBR and IE, persons with disabilities are empowered to change their life chances and obtain the means to participate more fully in their communities. This is why 'Education for All (EFA) by 2015' calls for

capacity building of its educational staff so that they can meet the diverse learning needs of all learners in the education system. Community workers and teachers need appropriate training, so that they know how to support and include disabled people within the services that they offer. Teachers, parents, curriculum planners, training institutions, school authorities and community workers are all key players in the development of a truly inclusive education and community service. This mutual dependency is key to the connection between these paradigms. For example, CBR workers may identify children with disabilities whom they refer to ordinary schools. This is a first and vital step in the beginning of the inclusive education process and needs to be met with acceptance and interest by the teachers. The reverse association may occur when educators refer learners with disabilities to CBR workers for vocational training placements and other related community services. Therefore, CBR and IE are inter-related and co-exist in some communities to complement each other.

### **CBR WITHIN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN MALAWI AND UGANDA**

In 1992, the Ministry of Education in Uganda, established a special needs education programme with two clearly different branches. These were Educational Assessment and Resource Services (EARS) which were established in every district of the country to assess and assist children with disabilities at the community level and the Uganda National Institute of Special Education, set up to train teachers in special education practices (Kristensen, 1996). Meanwhile Malawi in 1992, established the Malawi Integrated Education Programme (MIEP). The aim of this programme was to reduce the number of children in special resource rooms (attached to regular schools) and residential schools in the 9 districts where CBR programmes existed. Unfortunately, MIEP was not a multi-disability oriented programme. It only targeted learners with hearing and visual impairments and proved to be of limited success.

Currently, the majority of CBR programmes in Malawi mainly focus on adults with disabilities. Few CBR programmes focus on children with disabilities. The Ministry of Education still continues with what was laid down by the faith-based organisations. A survey has not been conducted to find out the number of children with other disabilities in need of special needs education services. However, charitable organisations like Feed The Children Malawi, formerly Cheshire Homes Malawi and SOS Children's Village have come in to assist children with learning difficulties and those with physical impairments. They have established special needs education units in their institutions. CBR workers assist them in the identification of children with disabilities and referral services.

In 1994, Malawi introduced Free Primary Education. It was politically articulated such that no wider consultations were made though on the other side it is a response to many UN documents including the Salamanca statement (UNESCO 1994) and the Standard rules on the equalisation of opportunities of disabled persons. These documents promote the spirit of inclusive education and an inclusive society.

Unlike Malawi, Uganda started Universal Primary Education in 1997 with clearly stated policies, aims and objectives for the shift from special needs education to inclusion. Kristensen (1997) says "*Uganda may be the first country in the world to give children with disabilities priority to other children in the allocation of school places.*" Links were made to ensure that services reach all children with special educational needs. Teachers in the field were oriented and Uganda National Institute for Special Education (UNISE) introduced part-time special needs education courses, so that teachers could continue teaching in their normal schools. In June 1997, a component of special needs education was introduced in primary teacher training colleges so that all primary school teachers had some basics on aspects of special needs education. The relationship between these initiatives and the international legislation concerning these issues is clearly described by Millward et al (2005) and three key ingredients are identified as determinants of Uganda's success. These are, a powerful organisation of disabled people, the political

will and the relevant international guidelines. Every country has access to the latter commodity, the international guidelines, but how well they use them may differ depending on the other two determinants.

Recently, Malawi has finalised its new teacher-training curriculum that has units on special needs education and some aspects of community-based rehabilitation, as it moves towards inclusive education. Classroom teachers in inclusive settings require different coping strategies so that they can include, support and retain learners with disabilities in their classrooms. In addition, some families of children with disabilities lack problem-solving skills. They depend on professionals. Teachers and CBR workers must provide up-to-date information on disabilities, to families of children with disabilities and equip them with coping skills in caring for their children especially in rural areas (Chavuta, 2002, Hartley et al 2005). Malawi needs to extend CBR programmes to all rural districts so that parents and individuals with disabilities are able to access the CBR services like in Uganda. For instance, in Karamoja in Uganda, the Karimojong people depend on livestock for their survival and are semi-nomadic. Among them only 11.5% are literate. The children's domestic duties are essential to their family's survival. For the children to access basic education, a programme called Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) was introduced. The programme is strongly community-based (Stubbs, 2002) and has promoted inclusion in education as follows:

- o The community initiated ABEK and facilitators are selected from the community
- Learning areas are totally relevant to the community and their survival. They include livestock education, crop production, peace and security and health
- The facilitators have lessons early in the morning before they need to go the fields and again in the evening when work has finished
- Girls are able to bring younger children whom they have to care for
- Boys are able to bring their herds to graze and still take part in learning to read and write

- Participation of children with disabilities
- Parents and elders are welcome to attend and take part
- Instruction is in their own language
- Teaching methods are active and involve music and dance
- The elders themselves are specialist facilitators on subjects such as indigenous history and knowledge of survival
- The District Education Office has a key role to play. It is involved in the administration of ABEK and ensures a strong link with the formal system

Since Uganda is ahead of Malawi, Malawi must learn how CBR strategy has been used in Uganda, to provide special needs education to children in rural areas. Through CBR, Uganda has achieved the following:

- Persons with disabilities have been trained in appreciating and managing disabilities. This has happened by increasing accessibility to educational facilities like the ABEK programme and many stakeholders taking an active role in community development issues
- Local communities have contributed assistive devices and other appropriate resources to assist children with disabilities access educational opportunities in schools. Some of the resources/devices provided include: wheel chairs, brailled textbooks, low vision devices
- Local communities have been assisted to establish resource centres/schools for children with disabilities
- Many families have been facilitated to secure corrective surgery for their children. This has been done in collaboration with CBR supporting NGOs e.g. Sight Savers International, religious organisations and charitable organisations, which paid for medical bills and transport costs
- Through CBR, local communities have been empowered to identify children in need of special needs services

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS PART OF CBR: ORIANG CHESHIRE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROJECT IN KENYA**

Like Uganda, Kenya has also responded to the call for inclusive education using the CBR approach. The Oriang Project has introduced inclusive education in the Kabondo Division of Rachuonyo District in western Kenya. Leonard Cheshire International is providing technical and financial assistance to the project. The project is being implemented in five pilot primary schools, with the vision of influencing inclusive education and community inclusion within Kenya. There is a Management Committee composed of 16 members. The committee has been trained in project management and supervises the work of 5 School Disability Committees (SDCs).

The Oriang project benefits 2568 children of whom 282 are school-going children with mild to severe disabilities while 25 are under home-based care programme. The cases identified so far, are children with visual impairment, physical and hearing impairments. The majority are children with specific learning disabilities thought to be mainly caused by malaria.

The Oriang project and the Uganda activities have been initiated in an environment with the following challenges:

- Inaccessible infrastructure
- Lack of specialised trained personnel e.g. psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, sign language interpreters, Braille transcribers
- Lack of adapted curriculum
- Lack of teaching, learning and assessment resources
- Large class sizes
- Negative attitudes
- Inadequate instructional materials
- Theoretical and academic teaching

The Oriang project has shown that its strategies have achieved the following:

- Improved accessibility to and in schools. The five schools have each constructed two-door adapted latrines to minimise sanitation problems faced by learners with physical impairments. Through community involvement, two schools have built ramps in their schools leading to classrooms and roads graded. 40% of the windows in schools have been widened and walls of three schools plastered and painted with brighter colours to improve illumination. The windows have been shuttered and doors secured for improved safety of teaching-learning resources. Families/homes with individuals with disabilities have also been encouraged to make their environments accessible to all people
- The Oriang Disability Resource Centre provides access to play materials and equipment as well as teaching-learning resources to teachers and the community
- The Oriang project has led to the introduction of the learning centre concept. This is a planned area in the classroom where learners are provided with the opportunity to be engaged in active learning, interaction, sharing and cooperating with each other
- Teachers have been equipped with different teaching methodologies that are learner centred and involve all the senses
- Classroom teachers have skills in developing individualised education programmes for learners with special educational needs
- Negative attitudes towards children with disabilities and other persons with disabilities have been reduced

## **SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD**

- African governments need to work together and introduce more CBR and IE programmes, targeting the majority of their populations who live in rural areas.

- For effective communication and coordination of CBR and IE activities, CBR Africa Network (CAN) offices should be opened up in every sub region of Africa: East Africa, Northern Eastern Africa, Northern Africa, Central Africa and Southern Africa
- To build the research capacity of CBR and IE practioneers, training attention needs to be given to developing their analytical and writing skills
- An African bulletin on CBR and IE should be initiated to be used as a communication and information tool for CAN member countries, scholars, researchers and other interested readers
- School Disability Committees/parent support groups must be strengthened for them to provide support to groups of parents/ caregivers of children with disabilities in schools and in the community
- Regular exchange visits between countries in the region must be made to share CBR and IE experiences

## CONCLUSION

CBR and IE are strategies for opening up opportunities for person with disabilities and including them in mainstream activities together with able bodied people. They both seek to develop the potential of persons with disabilities for them to be productive citizens in the community. Exclusionary policies and practices are challenged by active participation of all stakeholders in the community. Teachers, parents, CBR workers, curriculum planners, social workers, medical and education personnel, training institutions and school authorities are key players in the process of inclusion. They all need to promote multi-sectoral collaboration so that they can manage CBR and IE. CBR and IE programmes are the best ways of reaching children, youths and adults with disabilities in Africa so that they can participate and contribute to the development of their countries.

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